



Written by [James Heiser](#) on January 5, 2011

## Muslim Scholars Praise Murder of Pakistani Governor

The murder of a Pakistani governor is being greeted with adulation by “moderate” Muslim scholars. Why? Governor Salman Taseer opposed the death penalty for those convicted of blasphemy against Islam.

As Muhammad Zamir Assadi [reported for \*The New American\*](#),



On January 4, Salman Taseer, Governor of the Pakistan province of Punjab, was assassinated by his personal security guard in Islamabad’s Kohsar market. Malik Mumtaz Qadri, who belongs to the Punjab police, fired 26 bullets at Taseer before being arrested by Islamabad police.

According to police, the attacker stated that he had decided three days earlier to kill the Governor because he had defamed the Prophet Mohammad.

Governor Taseer’s actions in at least two recent incidents have been considered blasphemous by Muslim fundamentalists. The first occurrence concerns Asia Bibi, a Christian woman who has been sentenced to hang after being convicted of defaming the Prophet Mohammed. ...

Governor Taseer, who was a member of the Pakistan Peoples party (the political party leading the federal government), visited the Sheikhpura central prison to meet with Bibi. According to the *Express Tribune*, the Governor stated afterward (on November 20) that he would take her clemency appeal to the President. He also told the media after the meeting that Bibi denied saying anything disrespectful about either the Prophet Muhammad or Islam, adding that villagers had chased her to her home, sexually assaulted her, and dragged her through the streets.

Given his solemn responsibility to protect the life of Gov. Taseer, Qadri’s betrayal of his duty was not only cowardly (he allegedly shot Taseer in the back) but also the murder of his coreligionist — a man who was simply fulfilling his duty to ensure that a woman received justice under Pakistani law. But far from censuring his actions, many Islamic scholars are leaping to Qadri’s defense.

An article by AP reporter Babar Dogar (“[Muslim scholars praise killer of Pakistan governor](#)”) offers a window into the mind of what passes for “moderate” Islam:

More than 500 Muslim scholars are praising the man suspected of killing a Pakistani governor because the politician opposed blasphemy laws that mandate death for those convicted of insulting Islam.

The group of scholars and clerics known as Jamat Ahle Sunnat is affiliated with a moderate school of Islam and represents the mainstream Barelvi sect.

The group said in a statement Wednesday that no one should pray for Punjab province Gov.



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Salman Taseer or express regret for his murder. One of his security guards is the suspected killer. The statement also made a veiled threat against Taseer's supporters: "The supporter is as equally guilty as one who committed blasphemy."

Their comments came as thousands gathered under tight security Wednesday to pay silent homage at Taseer's funeral.

The elusive "moderate school of Islam" has spoken, and it decrees death not only for those who are convicted in the kangaroo court of a Sharia-influenced legal system but death also for those who object to such a travesty of justice. By denying even the possibility of regret for the murder of Gov. Taseer, such "moderate" Muslim scholars seek to deny any peace in life *or in death* for those who would question whether a Christian woman should die for a false accusation of blasphemy against Islam. Such a mindset earns its proponents the designation of advocating a religion of terror, since it relies on death threats and justifies the murder of government officials to silence those who would even question its justice.

[In an article for the website of the \*Pakistan Christian Post\*](#), the words of Nasir Saeed — director of of the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement, and an opponent of the blasphemy laws — summarize the impact of the murder of Taseer as a "very dark day for Christians in Pakistan":

"It's a great loss for Pakistani religious minorities, because Salman Taseer was vocal about minority rights, changes to blasphemy law on several occasions, and on the release of Asiya Bibi from prison particularly," said Mr. Saeed, the director of the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement.

"The killing is a terrorist act against the Christians of Pakistan and it is a serious attempt to stop any possible changes to blasphemy law," he said.

Mr Taseer, he added, had petitioned the President to change the law and there was a danger that his plea will now be ignored.

The government has indicated it has no proposals under consideration to amend the blasphemy law and that the petitions by Mr Taseer and Sherry Rehman are being considered only as individual acts.

"This is very dark day for Christians in Pakistan," said Mr Saeed. "This is an act of oppression and of humiliation of the entire community and it is taking away from them the chance to be represented and to be heard."

The actions of so-called "moderate" Muslim scholars add the murder of Gov. Taseer to the growing roster of crimes perpetrated in the name of Islam, and continue the demolition of the myth of moderate Islam.

Related article: [Pakistani Governor Salman Taseer Assassinated](#)

*Photo: Salman Taseer, right, Governor of Pakistani Punjab Province, talks to reporters after meeting with Pakistani Christian woman Asia Bibi, left, at a prison in Sheikhpura near Lahore, Pakistan, on Saturday, Nov. 20, 2010: AP Images*



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